

Kings College Chapel – Recovering of lead roofs and associated repairs. Provision of PV panels. Provision of underground rainwater harvesting tank. Site facilities and hoardings.

The building inside the college complex and Registered Garden, is grade I Listed and features prominently within the Cambridge Central Core Conservation Area.

An accompanied pre-app site meeting took place on 3rd May. A demonstration set of nine solar PV panels had been erected on the chapel roof the previous week at the request of the College.

In general, from ground level, the large majority of the chapel roof is obscured. However, glimpses of the lead roof can be seen through piercings of the parapets and between the pinnacles and turrets from various vantage points. There are few higher level vantage points (eg Great St Mary's) and even from these, the parapet and pinnacles dominate the view.

Comments

The outstanding significance of these heritage assets means that every effort should be made to understand potential impacts and to mitigate them.

It is noted that the proposals are subject to the Ecclesiastic Exemption from Listed Building Consent. Therefore, the main matters for Local Planning Authority consideration are the impact that the proposals would have on the settings of the Listed Building, or the settings of adjacent Listed buildings, and on the conservation area. Also,

Archaeological impact from the water storage tank. Preliminary desk-top assessment would indicate least sensitive potential locations.

Planning impacts – advert consent for the hoardings?

Oliver Caroe has made it clear that the lead roof covering is in urgent need of replacement. This is therefore also the opportunity to install solar PV panels concurrently (and to introduce rainwater harvesting infrastructure and increase the capacity of rainwater disposal systems).

The demonstration PV panel installation we saw at the site meeting showed the top, sides, and bottom of the installation to be its sensitive aspects. The panels themselves were black-edged and black background without dominant silver colour wiring grids on the surface. As such, their colour appeared to tone-in well with the lead roof when seen from the ground, from a distance (eg from Kings Parade). This is not necessarily the case from higher vantage points though – a view (below) from the Pitt Building tower shows black panels against a light grey roof which raises

whether there is a more grey rather than black option for the colour of the panels (evidently, it is possible to get PV panels in various colours!) ?

The edges of the installations bare metal coloured supporting frame could be seen but would not be with a full-length installation to the gable ends of the building as proposed. The bottom of the installation cast a shadow visible through the perforated parapet. The top of the installation appears to raise the ridge line of the chapel when seen from a distance.

Though the shadow and ridge line matters would be changes, this leads to the question of whether the changes would be harmful ? This may depend on their interaction with decorative features of the walls or parapet. For instance, would an apparently higher ridge line rise above the perforated parapet (compared to the current view) as seen from Trinity Street/Senate House/St Mary's Street and from within the College front court?

Importantly though, such changes could be minimised or avoided as discussed on site, by introducing a lower line of panels to reduce/eliminate the shadow gap or moving the installation down the roof slope to avoid perception of the ridge being raised (but moving it down may create a new colour contrast near the ridge!).

It should be checked that bare metal frame edges at the west (The Backs) end of the PV installation would catch the light viewed from for instance, King's College Bridge.

Any wiring boxes placed on the roof associated with the panels should be black/grey coloured.

It is likely that it is the closer (especially Kings Parade and nearby college buildings) rather than more distant receptors will be the most sensitive to profile and relationship to existing roof embellishments, whereas from more distant view, colour contrast will be the consideration.

Further Information Required

Formal 'verified view' assessment and photomontages with *the latest proposed configuration* of roof panels based on the views referred to above / those in the Covering Paper to the Faculty Application.

Conclusion

The final proposed position of the installation up/down the roof slope will affect the degree of change visible on the roof from the surroundings

Provided all opportunities are taken to minimise the visibility of the panels (colour, position etc), officers are likely to be able to support the proposal on the basis of its benefits.

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Rooftop view with 6 panel sample on the chapel roof.